

A SERMON

ON THE TEXT,

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities."—

1 Tim. v. 23.

PREACHED IN THE

AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

MONTREAL,

ON SABBATH EVENING, DECEMBER 29, 1840.

BY REV. DAVID DOBIE,

Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Huntingdon.

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PRINTED BY CAMPBELL & BECKET.

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Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Montreal.

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ON THE TEXT, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."—1 Tim. v. 23.

THIS is not an age for feeble, half-uttered exhibitions of truth. We must speak out, and speak plainly, if we speak at all. The citadels of intemperance, frowning upon us defiance, are not to be taken by a few palpitating, heart-broken endeavours : done out of constraint, with a slack hand, and a faltering tongue. A voice of thunder, deep-toned and terrible, is needed ; and moral courage, not shrinking from the path of duty, but pressing fearlessly into it, full of heavenly enthusiasm ; determined to gain its object at all hazards, save that of offending God, and doing injury to man.

It is thus I wish to speak. And were I to state the reasons by which I was prevailed on to make the present effort, next to the request of the Committee of the Montreal Temperance Society, I would place my own solemn convictions, that something, at this crisis, ought to be done here in the cause, especially by the CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. Unless the friends of our cause bestir themselves to check the progress of intemperance, there is no probability that its enemies will. And if the Ministry be silent, or envelope themselves in mist, and become invisible or dumb, intemperance will increase ; the liquid fires already kindled, will burn with augmented fury ; fresh crimes will stain and disturb the community ; new victims will bleed and die on the altar of drunkenness ; and the Church of our blessed Lord will be, in all human probability, covered with fresh reproach ; and God—the living God—dishonoured, and His name blasphemed by devils in the shape of men.

One great obstacle in the way of our principles, is the impression which some cherish, that the Bible is opposed to total abstinence. It is my intention to drive our opponents out of one passage of the Bible in which they often take refuge : I refer to the apostolical advice—1 Tim. v. 23 : *Drink no longer water ; but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.*

I. I shall demonstrate the identity between this advice and our pledge :

III. Enter into a brief argument to prove that duty calls upon us to adopt and practise total abstinence from all that intoxicates.

I. My first object is to demonstrate the identity, or agreement, between the text and the pledge of our Society.

On the evening of the 5th February, 1839, in this house,* we adopted by vote the following form of words which now constitute our pledge, viz: *We, the undersigned, do agree, that we will not use intoxicating liquors, as a beverage, nor traffic in them; that we will not provide them as an article of entertainment, or for persons in our employment; and that in all suitable ways, we will discountenance their use throughout the community.*

The Total Abstinence Society formed in London on the 1st of May last, adopted the *principle* involved in the above pledge: whether they adopted the form of words is not material.

The Scottish Association have for their pledge the following form of words: "I do voluntarily promise that I will abstain from ale, porter, cider, wine, ardent spirits, and all intoxicating liquors, and will not give nor offer them to others, except as medicine, or in a religious ordinance; and that I will discourage all the causes and practices of intemperance."

Total Abstinence Societies, throughout the world, agree in the principle embodied in these pledges. It is my conviction, that the advice of the Apostle, is to all intents and purposes, identical with that principle.

Paul advises the use of wine as a medicine—"for thy stomach's sake". Our pledge forbids its use in *health*, implying of course that in sickness, it *may* be used, in cases of absolute necessity. The pledge of the Scottish Association expressly states, that it may be used as a medicine. Up to this point then, there is no difference between our pledge and the text.

Again, Paul advises Timothy to take "a little"—only a *little*, even in sickness. But this agrees precisely with our sentiments. For in case "the stomach and frequent

* The American Presbyterian Church, Montreal.

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infirmities" *absolutely* require it, and *cannot* do without it, we hold, that as small a doze of the poison be administered, as the nature of the emergency will allow. Why should we object to one medicine and not to all. In a case of necessity, where medicine is required, and it is ascertained that alcohol, or wine *from the grape*, is the medicine which ought to be given, let it be given, in the name of humanity. Our pledge admits all this: this is the sum and substance of the text; and the agreement, therefore, between them is demonstrated.

Where lies the difference?—Merely in the use of different phraseology, to express the same thing.

I solemnly declare, that if I saw any *real* difference between this text of Scripture and the pledge of the Total Abstinence Society, I would here proclaim it. As I fear God I would make it known, come what injury there might on our cause. What should keep me from declaring it? I never mean to hold fellowship with any association founded on principles opposed to the word of God. My name should be erased immediately from the books of the Total Abstinence Society, if in my opinion its pledge contained the least semblance of opposition to Scripture. *In this pulpit*, I would record my solemn protest against this Society and its pledge; nor would I cease so to do, until called to my last account in the eternal world. Let the Total Abstinence Society go down, if antisciptural. Perish its pledge, if it differs, so as to *contradict* the text read in your hearing.

But what is the fact? Our pledge and the text are to all intents and purposes identical. I would as soon sign the one, as the other; and should I sign Paul's pledge, I would consider myself in conscience bound, to act up in every particular to the pledge, now signed by the Total Abstinence Society.

II. I have now arrived at the second thing proposed, which was to show what may be further inferred from the text.

1. We infer that TIMOTHY practised total abstinence from all drinks stronger than water.

"Drink no longer water;" says the Apostle. This monition proceeds plainly on the ground that Timothy *drank* only his drink. Even in feeble health the young minister did not use even wine; if he had, the

advice of Paul was out of place! Who can prove that Timothy did not abstain from wine for the same reason that we assign for abstinence from all that intoxicates? It is more than probable that he witnessed the results of using such drinks, and thence resolved neither to touch, taste, nor handle the pernicious and fatal beverage.

2. We infer that PAUL acted on our principles. For Paul was not the individual to recommend that to another which he was himself unwilling to practise. And besides, we have (Rom. xiv. 21) a declaration of his sentiments, which we proudly adopt as the fundamental principle of the Total Abstinence Society. He says: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

From this moment we feel confidence in our sentiments. Here is high authority for total abstinence. For let Paul be certified of the fact, that intoxicating drink results in mischief, either to the soul or body of a fellow immortal; and from that instant he becomes a decided friend of our cause. He has no reverential feelings for wine—no unruly hankerings after it—no well sounding syllogisms to defend the use of it. A pure and disinterested flame of philanthropy burned in his manly bosom. If eating *meat* caused any of those who came under his influence to fall into sin, he would eat *no meat* while the world stood. Were this audience a congregation of ministers, in view of Paul's noble determination, they might be thus addressed: Men of God! heralds of the everlasting gospel! preachers of righteousness! of the ravages of intoxicating drink you have all heard. How it wastes property: destroys character: obliterates happiness and human life, and precipitates into ruin the immortal soul for which the Son of God died, and for the salvation of which you labour and pray. Brethren, this Juggernaut whose temples are full of worshippers, with every revolution of its murderous wheel, crushes to death upwards of 100,000 human beings! fills 100,000 families with indescribable sorrow! the community with corruption and crime; the church with confusion and reproach; and perdition with the souls of the damned. So long as this system of using intoxicating liquors as a beverage continues, these terrible results *will, must* follow.

Nothing has yet been able to stop them. Misery and crime, from the use of these liquors, have increased in a most fearful ratio! Human nature must cease to be what it is; intoxicating liquor loose its present properties, before intemperance and its miseries cease. As I dread the investigations of the last day, I dare not in the slightest degree knowingly encourage this system of drinking! *It is*, and it *has been*, and it *ever will be*, ruinous to man, for time and eternity! Let my right hand forget its cunning, if I ever lift it once to my mouth, to perpetuate this giant—this accursed iniquity! Ministers of the *holy gospel*—servants, friends, companions of the *immaculate Jesus*—*put the fear of man—the world—pleasure—and Satan, beneath your feet!* Why should *you* desire this system to continue? I know it is not in your hearts to form such a desire. But he that is not against this system is for it. Arm yourselves then with the same mind which was in Paul, and proclaim aloud: “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

3. The third inference is, that the use of intoxicating drink by persons *in health* is not authorized by this text.

This needs no elucidation. You cannot quote this passage to justify the present system of drinking. A small quantity of the *pure juice of the grape* in sickness would prove a cordial. There is no doubt of it; but for one I have very serious doubts, whether any quantity of the abominable mixtures, which in this country pass for wine, if administered either to the sick or the sound, would deserve even the *name* of medicine. I have serious doubts whether in such cases, the cure be not worse than the disease. But to quote this text in defence of drinking wine and other intoxicating liquors *in health*, not for the stomach's sake, but for the appetite's sake, is a perversion of Scripture, against which we feel assured, the consciences of those even who do it, must bear a silent and impressive testimony.

4. Finally, we learn from this text, that Ministers of the Gospel may join a Total Abstinence Society.

Timothy carried the principle of abstinence to the extreme point of using no intoxicating drink, even in feeble health.

Paul declared his sentiments exactly to correspond

with our pledge. There was no sentiment he ever uttered, to which he would not subscribe.

John the Baptist "drank neither wine nor strong drink." In this, did he violate the commandment of God?

But it will be said: the Saviour made wine and used it at Cana. I reply; it is not said that our Saviour used wine. To make such an assertion, is without authority; the fact cannot be proved. That he made wine is admitted; neither have we ever objected to drink *such* wine. The question is not on the use of such wine. We are speaking of the wines of this country and of intoxicating liquors in general—and we ask, suppose that, in view of the tremendous evils, temporal and eternal, which these drinks occasion to the souls and bodies of men, we refuse to use them, and pledge ourselves to that effect, shall we be accounted guilty of sin? Why then did John the Baptist drink no wine? Why did Paul say, if it made a brother to sin, it was not good to drink it? And why did Timothy practise such rigorous abstinence from all that intoxicates? You reply—"the Saviour made wine." True—he did; *but you cannot prove that the wine he made, was wine that would intoxicate.* Until you do, *candour* forbids you to mention *his* name in this argument. And might you not, as a minister, do good by advocating total abstinence from intoxicating drinks—more good than you are now doing—more good than a moderate drinker ever yet did in the cause of redeeming man from the curse of intemperance? There are not fewer than 5000 Ministers of the Gospel in America, decided friends and advocates of our principles. Are they doing wrong? Missionaries are sending home long and loud remonstrances, and with tears beseeching us to send to the heathen no more intoxicating liquors. Are they doing wrong? These liquors have been sent among the heathen; their effects have been disastrous; and there is no denying it. But *your* principles, not ours, have caused these disasters. And would the christian world do wrong, did they pledge themselves to carry no more of the poison to heathen shores? Would the millenium be delayed by such a measure? Would souls be destroyed beyond the seas for want of the accursed beverages of this christian country? Were the last drop of intoxicating drink consumed in the flames

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of Vesuvius, would this world be called to go into deep mourning at the calamity?—Who would be overwhelmed with uncontrollable sorrow on the occasion? Surely intoxicating drink in its Sunday clothes has been no such kind and admirable friend to the christian ministry, as to lay *them* under any necessity of putting on sackcloth at its destruction. Better had it been for some of them, had they never been born, than to have tasted that deadly poison. Could it be said this moment, that the entire body of the Christian Ministry is gone over to the total abstinence cause—what great misfortune would befall christianity or the world? Would the cause of religion languish, and churches fall down in ruins, and ministers starve in their studies, and societies of benevolence dwindle into nonentities, and the heathen perish without the gospel, and Christendom become Pandemonium? Would their signing the pledge of our Society operate as an earthquake and lay prostrate their churches? No! We believe that the *distilleries* would sooner feel the shock; and if the walls were not too much injured, some of these buildings would make capacious churches, which, if filled with the right kind of ministers, and the right kind of members (of this we are always confident), more good would come out of one of the worst of them, than there now comes out of all the distilleries in the world put together. A general conversion of ministers to total abstinence might be the forerunner of a general conversion of distilleries into churches; and such conversions there must be before the end of the world. The sooner they are brought to pass the better! Long enough has the world laughed at a winebibbing clergy. Too long has religion borne reproach for their attachment to the inebriating cup. Too long have they said to their flocks, by example and by precept: drink and fear nothing: every creature of God is good, and to be received with thanksgiving. Too long have Ministers slumbered over the ravages of intemperance.

III. I have reserved for the last, the weightiest task.

I feel and acknowledge my inability to do it justice: but, while I confess my infirmities, and wish for the sake of total abstinence, that the duty I now discharge had fallen into abler hands, yet I must say, that my own frailty and unworthiness excepted, I come to this task rejoicing as a giant in the greatness of his strength!

The goodness of my cause refreshes me. Every new sentence—every returning effort—inspire me with fresh courage! Why should it not be so? Is not truth on our side? Have we not disinterested motives to urge us on? Does not suffering Humanity rise up from its degradation and bless our endeavours? Does not Conscience add its approval? Does not Religion call to us to go on? Does not the *Father and Fountain of all good* crown our efforts with a blessing?

The position I now lay down is: it is *our duty to adopt and practice Total Abstinence* from intoxicating liquor.

1. SELF PRESERVATION makes it duty.—Begin the use of a beverage that intoxicates; take it by the moderate measure of just one glass after dinner, or before you retire to sleep; swallow a portion of this poison for any reason—and you do not know, neither can any one foretell the consequences. How often has one glass sealed the ruin of the drinker? It has riveted the young, and the old, the professing christian and the infidel, the judicious and the unwary, fast in the chains of drunkenness! The contingency of commencing the use of intoxicating liquor is such, that the first law of nature—the law of *self preservation*, forbids you to touch, taste, or handle the deadly poison!

Take a striking proof of what I here affirm. You may read the story in the anecdotes of the London Tract Society. A young mechanic was tempted to begin the use of intoxicating liquor. Other temptations came with it. They of course occupied his thoughts even in his sleeping hours. One night he dreamed that in a state of intoxication he fell from the top of the stairs—and died and went immediately to hell! It was a subterraneous cavern; thronged with an assemblage of beings clad in dark garments, carousing. He said to himself, all that I used to hear of this place is false. It is just the place for me! “You are all happy”—said he to one of those next him. At this, they uncovered their breasts and showed him a mass of *livid flame*. Horrified, he begged to get away from them on any terms: with difficulty he obtained permission to retire, on condition, that he should return that day twelve month. He awoke—it was *but a dream*. He communicated his feelings to a neighbouring clergyman, and the

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man of God urged him to abandon forever the intox-
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But finally he was tempted to drink again by a compa-
nion. He consented, and continued the habit until one
day in a state of intoxication he fell from the top of the
stairs, and died on the spot: It was on that day twelve
months, in which he had his dream! All I design
by introducing this fact, is to fix your minds on the
commencement and the *end* of taking intoxicating drink.
How little that young man thought of it. Begin, only
begin, and Omniscience alone can tell, what the *end* will
be. Strength of purpose—ability to command yourself
—resolutions, are broken as the green withs by Samson.
Strong drink is a giant that has carried off the gates of
Gaza upon his shoulders—and heaps upon heaps has he
slain with the jaw bone of an ass. An useless poison—
has operated upon men, with the potency of fabled magic.
It has stripped them of everything amiable: clothed
them in the habiliments of the savage: expelled *natural*
affection from their hearts: driven them into crime and
madness: released them from the fear of God—and
plunged them at last into the terrific whirlpool of eternal
misery! *Stand off the brink—come not within the*
first eddy of this whirlpool! Self preservation bids
you stand off!

2. If it be duty to labour for the *entire suppression*
of intemperance, it is your duty to *abstain entirely* from
the use of intoxicating liquor. For intemperance will
never cease, except by totally abstaining from the occa-
sions and causes of it: strong drink will madden de-
praved men to diabolical depravity, under the present
system of drinking, *for ever!* It will scorch and consume
both body and soul; its ravages will *never* cease!
Widowed mothers will weep: fatherless children will
lack bread, and grow up in ignorance and guilt:
profligacy will flourish: *licentiousness, gambling, mur-
der, death,* will multiply and follow upon each other's
footsteps in thick and dire succession: "liquid fire and
distilled damnation," in a boiling, fiery, resistless tide
will rise, and rush, and destroy in the midst of us
for ever! We ourselves may escape; but (and the
thought of it is dreadful) our *children may* perish:
our dear ones may become drunkards: they may die
in the street—in the prison—in the mad-house—or on

the ignominious scaffold! What *security* have we that *they will not*, when we look at the *taverns, grog-shops, and distilleries around us?*

To suppose that *moderate drinking*, or a judicious use of intoxicating liquor, will afford us or our *posterity*, *security* against intemperance, and its thousand crimes, and its ten thousand miseries, is *madness*. *It is ridiculous! It is perfectly absurd!* It is the most pitiable self-delusion! Look at the *science*, the *capital*, and the immense army of *distillers, brewers, tavern-keepers*, high, low, rich, and poor, that are engaged in this business! Look at the *assiduity* with which they pursue it: see them sitting up in their beds the live long night, notching a stick every half hour, at the call of the watchman, afraid to trust this business of death to any but themselves!

Look at them taxing their body and soul to the last possible limit: buying cheap grain: paying their workmen part in whiskey: straining every nerve to produce ten gallons for one—not satisfied with the old dilatory way of manufacture, they are inventing improved and patent methods; and applying the giant power of steam to their machinery, to distil poison by the minute.

And has *intelligence* really forsaken you, my hearers, that you imagine *moderate drinking* will root out intemperance, in spite of all this array of distilleries driven by steam, managed by immense capital and unwearied assiduity! It is a vain but a most *calamitous delusion!* On any system but that of *total abstinence*, these nurseries of hell—these servants of the Devil—will continue for ever to curse and destroy! *I could weep*; but what will tears avail! *I could cry aloud*; but my voice will soon be heard no more! It is not the might of *my* arm by which *you* and *your children's children* must be protected against this terrible enemy! Would to God that I could strike him a blow, from which he would never recover. On the last Sabbath of another year—the last year it may be to you—I call upon you, in the name of God and humanity, to comply with the voice of duty! On the spot, determine the course you will take. But remember, if you retire from this house, and knowingly encourage or perpetuate this *accursed, this soul-damning business*, I will testify against you in the day of judgment.

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